

that date. However, on May 1, President Bukele's supermajority in Congress summarily removed Mr. Melara without cause and appointed a political loyalist as Melara's replacement, contrary to the requirements of the Constitution and raising serious doubts about the continued independence of the office.

It is notable that prior to his dismissal, the ousted Attorney General, with U.S. support, was investigating a number of cases of corruption against top government officials, including a multibillion-dollar money laundering case. Then last week, in what can only be interpreted as a flagrant attempt to shield themselves from accountability, the Congress passed a law to provide retroactive immunity to all government officials implicated in corruption involving spending linked to the COVID-19 pandemic. Also last week, the Assistant Attorney General in charge of the anti-corruption unit suddenly resigned, for reasons that have not been explained, and was also replaced by a Bukele loyalist.

Those actions were just the beginning. El Salvador's Supreme Court has 15 justices elected for 9-year terms and distributed among different chambers. Every 3 years, Congress can appoint 5 justices from a list of 30 candidates submitted by the National Council of the Judiciary. The President has no say in the matter.

Justices can be assigned to and transferred from any chamber, except justices in the Constitutional Chamber who are appointed by the Congress strictly for that chamber and cannot be transferred. The chief justice of the Supreme Court is also selected by Congress from among the five members of the Constitutional Chamber.

The newly elected Congress would have elected five justices from different chambers of the Supreme Court in June from the already submitted list of candidates. However, on May 1, the Congress removed all five justices from the Constitutional Chamber and their substitutes, without cause or due process, arguing that their rulings were biased and contrary to the government's policies. Out of those justices only one would have completed his term in June. The other four from the Constitutional Chamber were serving terms until 2029. Apparently, the role of the judiciary as a separate branch of government that serves as an independent check on Executive power in a democracy is unacceptable to President Bukele and his congressional allies.

The Congress appointed new justices but not from a list of candidates submitted by the National Council of the Judiciary. So not only was the sudden removal of justices unconstitutional; so was the appointment of new justices.

The Constitutional Chamber had played an essential, historical role as a check on the Executive's abuse of authority, which is plainly why its jus-

tices were targeted for removal. The chamber often rebuked the Executive for overreaching in its actions, including the Bukele-ordered military occupation of the Congress in February 2020. Thus, by removing the Attorney General and the Supreme Court justices, the Congress gave President Bukele control of all branches of government, creating a situation in which corruption can flourish with impunity.

I have recounted these events because they have created a crisis that could have profound consequences for El Salvador, and for U.S.-Salvadoran relations. My concern is not only what it means for democracy in that country but what it could also mean for its economy and the livelihoods of its people. The stifling of democracy ultimately deprives already desperate people—suffering from the COVID pandemic, two hurricanes in 2020, and gang violence—of any hope their lives will get better, and this desperation is a major driver of migration to the U.S. border.

The United States has always been El Salvador's largest trading partner and its largest donor. CAFTA—the Central America Free Trade Agreement—established not only trade preferences but labor, health, and environmental standards. The results have been significant.

Forty-five percent of El Salvador's exports go to the United States under CAFTA, which amounts to \$2.6 billion a year.

Thirty-five percent of its imports come from the United States, totaling \$3.5 billion a year.

There are nearly 3 million Salvadorans living in the United States, of whom 200,000 have temporary protected status. Collectively, they send \$6 billion each year in remittances to their relatives in El Salvador, which amounts to 25 percent of the country's GDP.

On top of that, the United States has provided El Salvador with more than \$700 million in aid through USAID, the Millennium Challenge Corporation, and other agencies in the last 5 years alone. Much of the progress made with those funds is now at risk of being washed away.

The largest exporters in El Salvador are U.S. corporations, which are also the largest employers in El Salvador.

President Bukele knows that his dictatorial actions are a direct challenge to the United States and to the Biden administration's emphasis on democracy, human rights, and combating corruption in the region. Faced with criticism from the White House and the U.S. Congress, he may point to China as an alternative to the United States, as if a knight in shining armor from Beijing can gallop in and solve El Salvador's problems.

But the people of El Salvador have no connection with China, and they are not about to cast aside their longstanding relationship with the United States. Trade with China has always

been one-way and characterized by dumping practices that have destroyed local industries in El Salvador. There are no major exports from El Salvador to China except occasional shipments of coffee and sugar. Chinese infrastructure projects do nothing to help unemployed Salvadorians, when China sends the steel, concrete, and even the Chinese workers to build them.

The Salvadoran private sector knows that China isn't the answer. They know the country cannot prosper without democratic institutions and the rule of law.

El Salvador is a sovereign country, and President Bukele was democratically elected. He makes his own decisions. But the choices he and his allies in the Salvadoran Congress make, that are eviscerating El Salvador's democratic civilian institutions and empowering the armed forces, have consequences for U.S.-Salvadoran relations. They have consequences for our aid programs and for our support for financing for El Salvador from the IMF, the Inter-American Development Bank, and the World Bank and for our trade relations, and for visas.

This isn't about national sovereignty and foreign interference, as President Bukele has falsely suggested. His actions directly affect the United States, U.S. companies, our commercial relations, and the welfare of millions of Salvadorans in the United States, as well as the Salvadoran population.

I join others here and in El Salvador in urging President Bukele and the Salvadoran Congress to reconsider their unconstitutional actions and to restore the separation of powers and the rule of law. Don't destroy the Peace Accords' greatest achievement. End the attacks on the rule of law, respect the tenure of other justices and the Human Rights Procurator, and appoint justices to the Constitutional Chamber and an Attorney General following the established procedures and ensuring that they are people with the necessary professional qualifications, integrity, and independence.

TRIBUTE TO BRIAN RIENDEAU

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, throughout a year full of new and difficult challenges, the greater Louisville region has been fortunate to have my friend Brian Riendeau helping lead the response. As the executive director of Dare to Care food bank, Brian has been instrumental in delivering tens of millions of quality and nutritious meals each year around this community. His vision and talent support families when they need it most, and we owe him a major debt of gratitude. This summer, Brian will bring to a close his 12 years of remarkable leadership at Dare to Care. I would like to take a moment today to recognize his accomplishments and thank him for his vast contributions to Kentucky.

This last year wasn't the first time I've watched Brian deliver for Kentucky. Before we worked together in

his current role, I had the privilege of having Brian on my Senate staff. For 5 years, he was an important adviser on legislation and Kentucky-focused priorities. While I was sorry to see him leave my office, I was pleased to know he was headed to the Bluegrass. He spent more than a decade in corporate leadership at one of Louisville's biggest employers before dedicating himself full-time to combating food insecurity.

In 2009, Brian joined Dare to Care with a plan. He wanted to expand the food bank's physical footprint and its reach. Founded in Louisville more than 50 years ago to address a troubling rise of malnutrition, Dare to Care partners with nearly 300 local organizations to promote healthy and active lifestyles across the community. Brian grew the staff to 60-strong and developed a strategy to further invest in Louisville and the surrounding region. In the last few years, he completed a \$7 million-plus capital campaign to build a new community kitchen to serve even more Kentuckians.

I had the opportunity to see Brian's operation firsthand last July. In the first months of the pandemic, demand for Dare to Care's help jumped around 35 percent. Brian and his team overcame supply-chain disruptions, implemented social distancing and other medical precautions, and continued serving those in need. In fact, once Brian's team stocked its shelves, Dare to Care was even able to help other food banks in Kentucky fill their own. Brian's forward-thinking and commitment to service helped countless Kentucky families during the hardest days of this pandemic. I am so grateful to him and his team for working around the clock to feed Kentucky.

Dare to Care is well-positioned to continue fulfilling its mission for years to come, and Brian's outstanding leadership helped get it there. Whatever comes next for Brian and his wife Judy, I know I speak for his many admirers in wishing him all the best. I would like to express my personal gratitude for his years of dedication to Kentucky, and I encourage my Senate colleagues to join me in congratulating Brian for his many successes.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO WILLIAM "BILL" ALLEN, JR.

• Mr. COONS. Mr. President, today it is my pleasure to honor William "Bill" Allen, Jr., local business leader, community activist, author, and friend, for his tremendous contributions to Delaware and the growth and success of our communities.

If you have ever met Bill Allen, you will know he has a wonderful smile that will grab your attention when you walk in the room and will get you smiling as well. Bill is also serious about continuing to make important strides

in inspiring and bettering our State. Throughout his extensive career in the collections solutions industry, Bill was often the first or most senior African American in his organizations. Bill consistently reached new levels and set important precedents, led change, and inspired young African Americans. The knowledge and experience Bill gained throughout his career in the collections solutions industry led him to start his own company, ALW Sourcing LLC, a collections and customer contact solutions business that he leads with a wealth of knowledge, entrepreneurship, and industry experience.

In 2000, Bill and his wife, Dr. Kim Allen, founded A Friend of the Family, Inc., AFOF, a Delaware-based incubator for alternative learning programs. AFOF provides students with learning differences and behavioral challenges the tools and lessons necessary to overcome personal, environmental, and socioeconomic challenges. Under their leadership, the organization strengthens and empowers our community. The success of AFOF led Bill to be featured in *Business Week*, the *Baltimore Business Journal*, and *JET Magazine*.

He and Dr. Allen also teamed up to coauthor a book, "It Flows Through Us," which describes how working hard and giving back can generate success and happiness. When writing the book, Bill focused on making it accessible to all people so that it could be used in the minority- and women-owned business enterprise revolution. He also participates in this revolution through the multiple seminars he conducts yearly to increase individuals' understanding of business, diversity, leadership, motivation, and success. Bill's knowledge initiatives empower and inspire people to make positive changes that will improve lives across communities.

Bill served as the board chair of the African American Empowerment Fund, AAEFD, at Delaware Community Foundation and as a board member for the nonprofit charity Friends of Hockessin Colored School #107, FOHCS. During his time as chair, he led the fund to provide \$100,000 to the Hockessin Colored School #107, a historic school that played a role in a groundbreaking court case that became part of the landmark Supreme Court decision, *Brown v. Board of Education*. A student at the school was a plaintiff in the 1952 Delaware Court of Chancery case *Belton (Bulah) v. Gebhart*, which was appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court jointly with *Brown v. Board*. Thanks to the funding that Bill helped secure, the historic school is now being transformed into a center for diversity training, inclusion, and social equity. Its legacy will continue and its purpose has been reignited.

In my remarks at the reintroduction ceremony for this school, I stated that in order to change our future, we must confront our past. It is my firm belief that Mr. Allen's commitments to our community and the revitalization of

the Hockessin Colored School have played an important role in this mission and the growth and inclusivity of our State.

In both business and community involvement, all of Bill's accomplishments led to his induction into the Delaware Business Leaders Hall of Fame in 2020 as one of the first African-American inductees. This honor was awarded to him by the Leadership Council of Junior Achievement of Delaware, which recognized his influence as a business role model to the students whom the organization serves. I believe that this is a fitting testament to the great work Bill has done for our State.

Mr. President, Bill has made invaluable contributions to Delawareans. He has used his knowledge and experience to invest in a wide array of communities and inspire hundreds of citizens. He is well respected for such contributions and this recognition is well deserved.

Bill Allen, on behalf of all you have supported and inspired throughout your career, please accept our sincere gratitude. Thank you for your unwavering commitment to the Delaware community and for your dedication to your work that has brought about change, set important firsts, and inspired others. Thank you.●

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 3:08 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Alli, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 1065. An act to eliminate discrimination and promote women's health and economic security by ensuring reasonable workplace accommodations for workers whose ability to perform the functions of a job are limited by pregnancy, childbirth, or a related medical condition.

H.R. 2547. An act to expand and enhance consumer, student, servicemember, and small business protections with respect to debt collection practices, and for other purposes.

H.R. 2877. An act to amend the Public Health Service Act to direct the Secretary of Health and Human Services to develop best practices for the establishment and use of behavioral intervention teams at schools, and for other purposes.

MEASURES REFERRED

The following bills were read the first and the second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

H.R. 1065. An act to eliminate discrimination and promote women's health and economic security by ensuring reasonable workplace accommodations for workers whose ability to perform the functions of a job are limited by pregnancy, childbirth, or a related medical condition; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

H.R. 2547. An act to expand and enhance consumer, student, servicemember, and small business protections with respect to debt collection practices, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.